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PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES

MOSCOW AND BERLIN

The key to Soviet tactics on the Berlin problem lies in the decisions Moscow took in the summer and fall of 1955. Although at the Geneva summit meeting in July that year the Soviet leaders re-endorsed the standard formula for German reunification through free elections, they made it clear they had no intention of permitting a unification of Germany which would entail the dissolution of the East German regime and seriously threaten the postwar status quo. Having failed to block the entry of West Germany into NATO and Bonn's rearmament, Moscow adopted a new course aimed at gaining Western acceptance of the concept of two Germanys.

Moscow's initial move in this direction was the establishment of relations with Bonn during Adenauer's visit in September 1955. The USSR then immediately proceeded to consolidate and strengthen the position of East Germany by concluding a state treaty granting Ulbricht's regime all the attributes of sovereignty. The provisions of the treaty, concluded on 20 September 1955, were amplified by a simultaneous exchange of letters between Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin and East German Foreign Minister Bolz.

The Bolz-Zorin letters made East Germany (German Democratic Republic--GDR) responsible for control of its frontiers, of the demarcation line with West Germany, of the outer ring around Greater Berlin, of Berlin itself, and of the communications line between West Germany (Federal Republic) and West Berlin. The agreement, however, temporarily reserved to the USSR control of Allied military access

to West Berlin, and thus refrained from directly challenging the Allies' right to free access. It is this document which provides the justification for present East German actions.

A further step in constructing the new Soviet policy was spelled out by Foreign Minister Molotov at the Geneva foreign ministers' conference in November 1955 when he rejected reunification of Germany by means of free elections and declared that unification was possible "only" through a rapprochement between the two German states. He said the four powers were no longer primarily responsible for German unification, and proposed instead that they concentrate on negotiating a peace treaty.

The last step in this process was the new Soviet position that a peace treaty should be signed with both German states or a German confederation, in contrast to the former Soviet acknowledgment that a peace treaty would be concluded with a reunified Germany. For Moscow, this new approach left two significant issues unresolved--the status of Berlin and the conclusion of a final peace settlement.

The Soviet leaders were fully aware that continued Western occupation of Berlin and the absence of a peace treaty were tangible and symbolic manifestations that the division of Germany was considered a temporary phenomenon by the West and that the Allies refused to accept East Germany as either a permanent or legitimate government. The Soviet leaders

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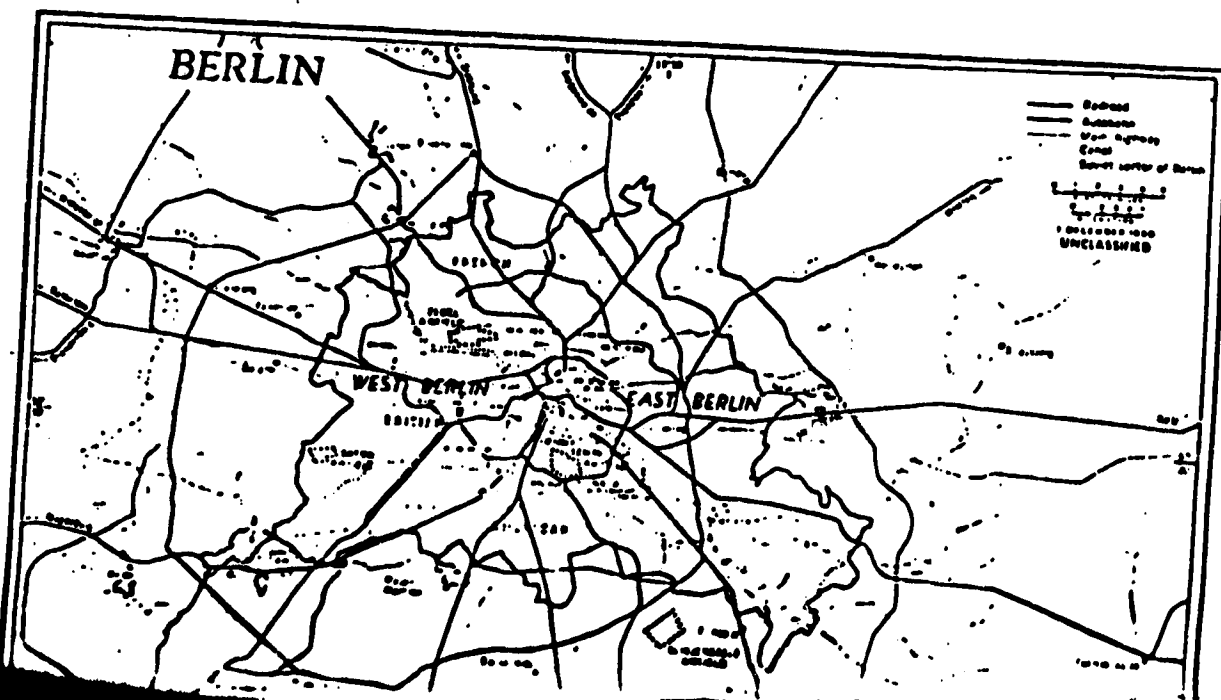
In addition, persistent Soviet erosion tactics had failed to achieve any decisive change in the Western stand by late 1958. Moreover, Khrushchev's campaign to convene a summit meeting to deal with European security and a German treaty had yielded no gains.

In the meantime Bonn not only had strengthened its ties with NATO and the new De Gaulle government but also, in March 1958, decided to accept NATO-controlled nuclear weapons and missiles. By July, the Adenauer government had received a popular mandate for this policy in a local election in which the issue of nuclear weapons played a decisive role. Against this background of growing German strength in Central Europe and increasing instability in East Germany, Khrushchev chose to reopen the Berlin question in a new and acute form.

Berlin Crisis: 1958-60

Khrushchev's aim was to confront the Western powers with the apparent dilemma of risking war to maintain their existing rights in Berlin or making concessions which would erode their position not only in Berlin but on the question of German unification. In addition to using the Berlin threat as a lever for overcoming Western resistance to a summit meeting under conditions favorable to the USSR, Khrushchev's strategy was to manipulate the Berlin issue as a means of wringing concessions from the West which would lead eventually to some form of recognition of the East German regime and to acceptance of the status quo in Eastern Europe.

Since May 1959, when negotiations opened with the Geneva foreign ministers' conference,



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Khrushchev's fundamental goal has been not to drive Western forces out of Berlin in some brief period, but to bring about a fundamental change in the legal status of the city. Such a change, in Moscow's view, would seriously undermine the Western powers' long-standing insistence that their rights in Berlin--based on the unconditional surrender of Germany--continue until Germany is reunified by four-power agreement.

The Soviet position, therefore, has consisted of two main elements: an offer to negotiate a modification in Berlin's status, and a threat to take unilateral action if no agreement is reached. While the maximum Soviet demand has continued to be for the creation of a free city, all subsequent amendments, including the compromise solution for an interim period, have aimed at liquidating the Western rights to remain in Berlin without restrictions, pending German unification. Since the West has no interest in negotiating away its rights, Moscow has used several ultimatum-like deadlines, either explicit or implicit, to guarantee continuing Western interest in discussing the issue and avoiding a showdown.

The breakdown of the summit conference in Paris marked the end of this negotiating phase of the Berlin crisis and confronted Khrushchev with the choice of carrying out his threat against Berlin and accepting the high risks involved or deferring action until a further round of negotiations could be attempted with a new American administration. His choice of the latter course clearly reflected not only his preference for a policy of limited risks but also his confidence that the forces which brought about the Paris meeting were still operative in the West.

Erosion Tactics

Despite Khrushchev's post-summit pledge not to raise tension in Berlin during this interim period, the Soviet leaders, in conference with Ulbricht, apparently mapped out a campaign of moves to confront the West with a series of faits accomplis designed to weaken the Western bargaining position in a future conference and maintain a state of tension prior to further talks. With the main issue of Allied rights deadlocked pending negotiations, Moscow and the East Germans turned to the most vulnerable area and least dangerous aspect of the Western position--West German access.

The first concentration of fire on Bonn came on 30 August, when the East Germans used the little-publicized meetings of refugee groups in West Berlin to demonstrate their control not only of the zonal demarcation line but of the Berlin sector boundaries as well. With the 9 September order requiring West Germans to obtain special permission to enter East Berlin, the East Germans began to put into practice their contention, supported by the Bolz-Zorin letters, that East Berlin was the capital of the GDR.

This contention was buttressed by East German refusal to honor West German documentation for entry into Berlin by foreign diplomats accredited to Bonn. Moscow provided full diplomatic support in its note of 26 September confirming the validity of the Bolz-Zorin agreement granting East German sovereignty in Berlin. To underline this position, the Soviet commandant objected to Allied use of the title "commandant of the Soviet sector," long in disuse by Moscow but never specifically disavowed.

Having established the right to control the sector

border, thereby making it de facto a state frontier, the East Germans will probably concentrate on improving the technical aspects of this control. This may mean rearranging transportation schedules within Berlin, reducing the number of crossing points--there now are five points where West Germans can obtain permits to enter East Berlin--and increasing the number of police to permit more effective checking.

Tightened controls, possibly introduced for control of West Germans, would also be utilized to screen more effectively the movement of East Berliners and East Germans. At some point the East Germans may announce new regulations forbidding East Berliners and West Germans to enter West Berlin without official permission or special documentation, thereby greatly increasing the risks for potential refugees.

At the same time, the East Germans can be expected to continue their psychological warfare against the West Berliners. A first step in the latest campaign was the decree making it impossible for West Berliners to visit bloc countries unless they obtain a special East German insert in their personal identity documents. Although for many Berliners this is a minor personal inconvenience, the GDR's refusal to honor West German passports implies that the West Berliner is a new type of stateless person.

High on the list of potential harassments will be some action against commercial flights through the air corridors--the one aspect of nonmilitary travel between Berlin and Bonn which the East Germans have not brought under control. Although the East Germans have long asserted they have the right to control this traffic, the possibilities of dangerous incidents or of a partial air blockade have deterred Moscow from allowing such action thus far.

Recent East German and Soviet statements, however, suggest that this issue could become critical. The East Germans might begin by informing the Western airlines that unless they conclude traffic agreements with the East zone or with the East German airline Luft-hansa, the regime will consider their flights illegal. At that point the Soviet controller in the Berlin Air Safety Center would probably inform his Allied colleagues that Moscow would limit its guarantee of flight safety to military flights only.

Pressure on the Western airlines to reach agreement with the East Germans could be applied by a series of incidents in the corridor. If the airlines opened negotiations, the East Germans would probably insist on some form of passenger control, with the result that passenger lists would dwindle.

Surface access, however, remains the most critical and therefore most vulnerable aspect of Berlin's ties to the West. In considering this issue, the USSR and the GDR would probably avoid the mistakes of the 1948-49 blockade and refrain from interfering with the movement of Allied freight or personnel and from holding up shipments of food or medical supplies, concentrating instead on stopping the movement of raw materials and processed goods essential to the city's industry.

For the bloc, a serious reduction in the flow of goods would have the obvious advantage of causing unemployment in West Berlin and weakening its over-all economic position. In such a deteriorating situation, the free-city concept would be heavily propagandized as an alternative status.

There are hundreds of harassment measures available to advance this objective of

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